Sponsored Scheme "Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms" launched in May, 2005 aims to support State Governments' efforts in revitalization of the extension system by promoting a new institutional arrangement for technology dissemination in the form of an Agriculture Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at district level. ATMAs have been constituted in 565 districts of 27 States and 2 UTs so far.

One of the important features of the scheme is to mobilize the commodity base Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) at village level, which in turn are expected to federate at block, district an State level. These groups are supported for their capacity building and skill development and are also provided revolving fund for their activities. Under capacity building activities FIGs are also provided guidance about the better marketing opportunities and advantage of formation of cooperatives/producers' companies. Further, under the market led extension activities of Central Sector Research and Information Network Scheme also such guidance/training is being provided to the representatives of Farmers' Groups.

Production and requirement of cotton

3412. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated production of cotton this season;

(b) the estimated requirement of cotton in the country, particularly in the handloom sector;

(c) the estimates of world-wide production and whether there is any shortfall; and

(d) the steps being taken to meet the deficit, if any, in the ensuing season?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) As per the 3rd Advance Estimates released on 22nd April, 2008, production of cotton in the country is estimated at 23.19 million bales of 170 kg. each (3.94 million tonnes) during 2007-08.

(b) The requirement of cotton in the country during 2007-08 is estimated at 24.16 million bales (4.11 million tonnes). Requirement of cotton for the handloom sector is not available separately.

(c) Production of cotton in the world during 2007-08 is estimated at 26.31 million tonnes against the estimated consumption of 26.72 million tonnes.

(d) A Technology Mission on cotton is under implementation in the cotton growing States of the country since 2000-01 for increasing the production and productivity of cotton by focusing on increasing availability of cotton seeds, covering more area under hybrids, thrust for evolving area specific technology, popularization of integrated pest management, increasing efficient use of irrigation water, field demonstrations for transfer of technology to farmers and farmers' training.

The Central Institute for Cotton Research and the Centres of the All India Coordinated Cotton Improvement Project are developing high yielding varities/hybrids to increase the production of cotton in the country. These organizations also produce breeder seeds of varieties and parental lines of hybrids for further multiplication by seed producing agencies for supply of certified seeds to cotton growers.